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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Identical letters dated 11 May 2018 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I am compelled to write to you once again, for the seventh week in a row, as unarmed, defenceless Palestinian civilian peaceful protesters participating in the "Great March of Return" in the Gaza Strip and throughout the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, continue to be targeted and brutally shot dead by Israeli occupying forces. It is clear that, absent serious measures of accountability, Israel, the occupying Power, will continue, as it has over the past six weeks, to kill and injure Palestinian civilians with complete impunity. The international community must no longer remain silent in the face of such blatant crimes committed by the occupying Power against the unprotected and defenceless Palestinian population that it holds hostage under its 50-year occupation.

As of the writing of the present letter, the Israeli occupying forces have today killed one more Palestinian civilian, Jabr Salem Abu Moustafa, age 40, and injured more than 730. Moreover, on 3 May, Anas Shawqi Abu Aser, age 19, succumbed to critical injuries that he had sustained in east Gaza City on 27 April at the hands of Israeli occupying forces. Moreover, on 7 May, Israeli forces killed Bahaa Abdel Rahman Qadih, age 23, and Mohammed Khaled Abu Rida, age 20, in east Khuza'ah town, located in east Khan Yunis city.

The latest casualties bring the total number of Palestinians who were killed for daring to raise their voices to protest Israel's systematic violation of their human rights, as well as to demand an end to occupation, siege and dispossession, and to call for independence, freedom and return to their ancestral lands since the six-week Great March of Return began on 30 March, to at least 45, including children and journalists. It should be noted that the majority of those killed were refugees whose families had been displaced from their homes and lands during Israel's ethnic cleansing campaign in the 1948 Nakbah.

Moreover, the number of Palestinians wounded and injured throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory since the protests began has now surpassed more than

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6,800. Of those injured, more than 1,900 had been shot with live ammunition and many are in serious or critical condition. The injuries sustained by protesters have been horrific, likely to leave many of them with permanent disabilities, according to doctors at the European and Shifa hospitals in Gaza City. The director of the emergency department at Al-Shifa, Gaza's largest hospital, stated that most of the casualties had been wounded by live ammunition, mostly shot in the lower limbs, crushing large parts of the bones, cutting into veins, nerves and muscles, and losing skin in the injured area. At least 28 Palestinian civilian protesters have lost limbs as a result of Israeli sniper fire.

The mass influx of casualties, compounded by more than a decade of Israel's illegally imposed blockade and the targeting of paramedics and ambulances by Israel, the occupying Power, have left essential health services in Gaza barely able to function. Since 30 March, there have been nearly 5,000 hospitalized injuries, with an additional 4,255 treated in field medical trauma stabilization points. Here, we also appeal to all States to continue their vital humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, especially during the medical emergency in Gaza, where the health sector is coping with the mass influx of casualties, and to increase their support, if possible, to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which, beyond humanitarian aid, stands for hope and respect for rights and dignity, so crucial in the absence of a solution and amid growing despair and uncertainty about the future.

Against this backdrop of criminal activity in Gaza, Israel, the occupying Power, has also continued to persist in its deliberate, systematic and gross violations in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. This includes the continuation of its colonial settlement enterprise, implemented through, inter alia, the demolition of Palestinian homes and structures, the confiscation of Palestinian land, the forcible transfer of Palestinian families and communities, the construction of settlements and transfer of its citizens thereto, the encouragement and condoning of settler violence and terror, and the fragmentation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory through segregated roads, checkpoints and the illegal Wall.

In this regard, Israel recently published new military orders and decisions to facilitate settlement activity on Palestinian land. The Bedouin community in Khan al-Ahmar has been threatened with forcible transfer to the "Ayn Shams" area, near Abu Dis, in order to make way for the expansion of settlements. The so-called Zandberg Committee has proposed to "legitimize" thousands of settlement units built on private Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank. Israel is also working to rehabilitate a wide road network linking the settlements in the West Bank with occupied Jerusalem in an attempt to consolidate the annexation of the "Ma'ale Adummim" settlement bloc in the West Bank. Israeli forces have bulldozed scores of dunums of Palestinian land to make way for the expansion of settlements, including agricultural land in Asirah al-Qibliyah village, south of Nablus, in order to expand the settlement "outpost" affiliated with the Yitzkhar settlement, and lands planted with olive and forest trees in the town of Kafr al-Dik, in Salfit, with a view to expanding the "Ata Zahav" settlement.

Heinous crimes by Israeli settler terrorists also continue unabated. Only this morning at dawn, a group of Israeli settler terrorists set ablaze the home of the Dawabsheh family in the village of Duma, in the West Bank, breaking a window and throwing a Molotov cocktail inside before fleeing the scene. The eldest son, Ahmed, only 6 years old, was severely injured, with burns all over his body. In July 2015, the same Ahmed suffered severe burns after Israeli terrorist settlers threw firebombs into his family's home, burning alive an 18-month-old baby, Ali, as he slept in his bed and severely burning his mother and father, Reham and Sa'ad, who later died from their wounds, leaving Ahmed orphaned.

As Israeli settlers continue their rampages, terrorizing and traumatizing Palestinian families, we call again for immediate measures to hold accountable all settlers committing crimes against the Palestinian people. Impunity for Israeli settlers cannot continue to be the norm, and the international community must demand that Israel uphold its obligations to investigate all such crimes and hold the perpetrators accountable. Terrorism in all its forms must be unequivocally condemned and ceased.

Meanwhile, Israel is trying to keep the international community from witnessing its illegal practices against the Palestinian people by continuously resorting to distortions of reality through propaganda and by denying human rights organizations access to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. This week, Israel decided to deport a Human Rights Watch official for reporting on human rights violations in areas under Israeli control. As expressed in a statement by 16 Israeli human rights groups this morning, in solidarity with Human Rights Watch, "Rather than trying to hide the occupation from the world — end the occupation".

In the light of Israel's ongoing premeditated killing and maiming of unarmed protesters in Gaza, we must again call upon the international community to ensure protection for the Palestinian people. International law, including humanitarian and human rights law, and the relevant United Nations resolutions, must be upheld without exception. We urge the Security Council to act on its responsibilities in this regard and also appeal to all States to fulfil their legal obligations, including to respect and ensure respect for the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Moreover, we continue to call for an independent and transparent international mechanism in order to bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice and also to avert further bloodshed among the innocent civilian population in the besieged Gaza Strip.

Moreover, the broader historical context must be addressed. The international community must ensure respect for international law by compelling Israel to bring its decades-long occupation, siege, oppression and dispossession of the Palestinian people to an end. The voices of the peaceful Palestinian protesters in Gaza, as of those of peoples of conscience worldwide, must be heard and heeded for the sake of peace, security, freedom, dignity and basic humanity.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine
to the United Nations